

8 corresponding plurality of virtual links, based at least in part on the relative order in which data
9 packets are transmitted on each of the links, the corresponding pointer value associated with each
10 respective data packet being used to determine an order in which the respective data packet is
11 promoted.

1 2. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 receiving the transmitted data packets from each of the plurality of virtual links in a
3 common receive buffer.

1 3. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 2, further comprising:
2 reading received data packets from the common receive buffer based, at least in part, on
3 the pointer value assigned in each of the pointer value buffers.

1 4. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 3, wherein the data packets are
2 promoted from the receive buffer with priority given to pointer values in pointer value buffers
3 associated with the virtual links having higher quality of service levels.

1 5. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein a plurality of pointer
2 value buffers are used to store pointer values denoting the commencement of transmission of
3 data packets on a corresponding plurality of virtual links supporting a discrete quality of service
4 levels.

1 6. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein received data packets are
2 promoted in pointer value order with priority given to pointer value buffers associated with the
3 virtual links with higher quality of service characteristics.

1 7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the indication is an analog indication.

1 8. (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein the data network is an Ethernet
2 network and the indication is a receive data valid (RX_DV) signal.

1 9. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the order of pointer
2 values in each of the pointer value buffers do not correspond to the order of data packet
3 transmission.

1 10. (Previously Amended) An apparatus comprising:
2 a receive buffer having a plurality of records in which to store frames of data received
3 from a plurality of virtual links, each virtual link associated with a particular quality of service
4 level;
5 a plurality of pointer value buffers each associated with at least one of the plurality of
6 virtual links; and
7 a network interface, coupled to the receive buffer and the pointer value buffers, to assign
8 a plurality of pointer values to an appropriate buffer, from among the plurality of pointer value
9 buffers, in response to the commencement of transmission of data packets on the associated
10 virtual link, the assignment of pointer values based, at least in part, on the relative order in which
11 the frames are transmitted on each of the virtual links, the corresponding pointer value associated
12 with each respective frame being used to determine an order in which the respective frame is
13 promoted from the receive buffer.

1 11. (Original) The apparatus of claim 10, wherein frames transmitted over each of
2 the virtual links are stored in the common receive buffer until retired by the apparatus.

1 12. (Original) The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the indication is an analog
2 indication.

1 13. (Original) The apparatus of claim 12, wherein the indication is an asserted
2 receive data valid signal.

1 14. (Previously Amended) The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the network interface
2 retires the received data packets from the receive buffer to a system state in order of pointer
3 value in each of the plurality of pointer value buffers.

1 15. (Previously Amended) The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the data packets are
2 retired in pointer value order for each of the plurality of pointer value buffers, with priority given
3 to pointer value buffers associated with higher quality of service virtual links.

1 16. (Previously Amended) In a data network, a method for preserving frame order of
2 a plurality of frames transmitted across a plurality of virtual links of a multi-link trunk, each of
3 the virtual links is associated with a discrete quality of service, the method comprising:

4 receiving up to a plurality of indications denoting commencement of frame transmission
5 on each of the virtual links of the multi-link trunk; and

6 assigning a plurality of pointer values to a plurality of records in appropriate buffers, the
7 plurality of records corresponding to a number of indications received from each of the virtual
8 links, the appropriate buffers chosen from among a plurality of pointer value buffers associated
9 with the plurality of virtual links, the assignment of the plurality of pointer values based at least
10 in part on a relative order in which the indications are received, the corresponding pointer value
11 associated with each respective indication being used to determine an order in which each
12 corresponding frame is promoted.

1 17. (Original) The method of claim 16, further comprising promoting the received
2 frames from a common receive buffer in pointer value order of the pointer value buffers, with
3 priority given to the pointer value buffers associated with the virtual links having higher quality
4 of service characteristics.

1 18. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein the indications are an analog signal
2 denoting receive data valid.

1 19. (Previously Amended) A storage medium comprising a plurality of executable
2 instructions which, when executed by a processor, cause the processor to implement a plurality
3 of functions including a function to preserve frame order of frames transmitted over a plurality of
4 virtual links each associated with a discrete quality of service, the function implementing pointer
5 value buffers associated with each of the virtual links and, upon receiving an indication of frame
6 transmission from the virtual link, stores pointer values in appropriate buffers from among the

7 pointer value buffers, the pointer values denoting the relative order of commencement of frame
8 transmission on the virtual link, the pointer value associated with each respective indication of
9 frame transmission being used to determine an order in which each corresponding frame is
10 promoted.

1 20. (Original) The storage medium of claim 19, wherein the executable instructions
2 further include instructions to promote data frames received in a common buffer from the
3 plurality of virtual links in pointer value order as stored in the pointer value buffers, with priority
4 given to pointer values stored in pointer value buffers associated with high quality of service
5 characteristics.

1 21. (Currently Amended) An apparatus comprising:
2 *cl* a multi-link trunk including a high-speed link an a low-speed link; and
3 a network interface including
4 a first pointer value buffer associated with the high-speed link,
5 a second pointer value buffer associated with the low-speed link,
6 a receive buffer from which [to promote] packets of data are promoted in an assigned
7 order based on pointer values with priority given to pointer values in the first pointer value
8 buffer.

1 22. (Previously Added) The apparatus of claim 21, wherein the network interface
2 further includes
3 a multiplexer having an output coupled to the first pointer value buffer, the second
4 pointer value buffer and the receive buffer; and
5 a plurality of media access controllers coupled to inputs of the multiplexer.

1 23. (Previously Added) The apparatus of claim 22, wherein the network interface
2 further includes a plurality of physical links each coupled to a corresponding media access
3 controller of the plurality of media access controllers.

1 24. (Previously Added) The apparatus of claim 21, wherein the receive buffer
2 promotes packets of data associated with a pointer value of the second pointer value buffer only

- 3 if all frames of data associated with a pointer value of the first pointer value buffer has been
- 4 promoted.